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"LIGHT FROM THE WEST": BYZANTINE READINGS OF AQUINAS

Marcus Plested

It is a truth universally acknowledged that East and West possess fundamentally opposing theological bases, presuppositions, and methodologies. But the assumption that East and West are meaningful and clearly delineated theological categories is of relatively recent provenance. It is the burden of this paper to demonstrate that this assumption of opposition was by no means prevalent in the last century of the Roman (or Byzantine) Empire. I propose to make this point through an examination of a range of Byzantine responses to the work of Thomas Aquinas.

The title of this essay, "Light from the West," deliberately invokes and reverses the "orientale lumen" lauded in the *Golden Epistle* of William of St-Thierry. Writing to a Carthusian monastery in the Ardennes in 1144, William famously praised its monks for their shining example of asceticism that made "the light of the East and the ancient fervor in religion of Egypt" shine amidst the "darknesses of the West and the cold regions of Gaul."¹ William's happy phraseology was taken up by Pope John Paul II as the *incipit* of his much-heralded Apostolic Letter of 1995, *Orientale lumen*. In that letter, the Roman Catholic Church is bidden to give heed to the wisdom and distinctive charisms of the Christian East. It must be said that the reverse process is all too rarely undertaken in the Christian East itself: few are the voices who would counsel the Orthodox to seek wisdom in the traditions of the Christian West. The certainty of eternal opposition can be comforting: it is far easier to expatiate on the follies and errors of the West than to come to terms with the problems and failings of our

own tradition, let alone seriously consider what might actually be learnt from the Christian West.

With such musings in mind, I was delighted to come across a fifteenth-century Byzantine canon in honor of Thomas Aquinas, hailing him as a light or star from the West. The canon is the work of Joseph, Bishop of Methone (John Plousiadenos) and praises Thomas in the best and most florid tradition of Byzantine hymnography. Here is a brief extract:

As a light from the west he has illumined
the Church of Christ
the musical swan
and subtle teacher,
Thomas the all-blessed,
Aquinas by name,
to whom we, gathered together, cry:
Hail, universal teacher!²

One particularly ingenious feature of this verse is the rendering of Aquinas not by the more usual ἐξ Ἀκινάτου or similar, but by Ἀγγίνου, a choice of term that conveys a sense of shrewdness, sagacity, and quickness of mind. This composition is not, of course, in liturgical use in the Orthodox Church and, as the work of a unionist bishop, carries no credence in Orthodox circles. It stands, nonetheless, as a poignant witness to the possibility of a creative interaction between Latin and Byzantine cultural and theological traditions.

We can be very precise about the date and even the hour at which Thomas emerged fully onto the Byzantine scene. It was at three o'clock in the afternoon of December 24, 1354, that the high imperial official Demetrios Kydones put the final touch to his translation of the *Summa contra gentiles*—a task that had taken a year to complete amid his many other pressing concerns.³ Why he felt compelled to be quite so precise in the timing he gives in his manuscript is something of a mystery: Perhaps he was indicating on the eve of the Nativity that this translation was itself a kind of incarnation; or perhaps he was simply practicing or showing off his Latin. But whatever the solution to that particular conundrum, it is clear that Thomas enjoyed a certain vogue in the last century of Byzantium, down to and beyond the cataclysmic fall of the City in 1453. Thomas's popularity was, however, emphatically not confined to a literary elite of anti-Palamite pro-unionists. What is perhaps most fascinating about the

Byzantine reception of Aquinas is the sheer diversity of those who took him seriously: both to learn from him and to critique him. Among his admirers we find unionists and anti-unionists, Palamites and anti-Palamites (and, indeed, any combination of those categories).

All this runs somewhat counter to the deeply ingrained scholarly supposition that theological method lies at the heart, or at least close to the center, of the theological estrangement between East and West. In the twentieth century, theologians on both sides of the gulf have urged this position of methodological incompatibility. Martin Jugie and Gerhard Podskalsky pursue this line from a Western standpoint, both taking St. Gregory Palamas and his supporters as archetypal of the philosophical incoherence and theological muddle of the Christian East.⁴ We also find shades of this approach in Rowan Williams's early critique of Palamas.⁵ Virtually all Orthodox theologians of the twentieth century have been content to accept the methodological gap between East and West, but with the sympathies reversed. Thus, the philosophical rationalism of the West is routinely contrasted with the experiential and mystical theology of the Christian East. This is true across the board, pertaining both to the so-called neopatristic and Russian religious schools of Orthodox thought.⁶

In the latter category, Sergius Bulgakov takes the rationalism of the Latin West to be encapsulated in Aquinas's doctrine of transubstantiation. This doctrine he sees as accomplishing the enslavement of theology by philosophy. It is a "rationalistic, groundless determination." Such unwonted probing of the mystery of transmutation is taken to be typical of medieval Western Scholasticism, in whose recesses lurked the "rationalism that was just beginning to raise its head and would lead to the humanistic Renaissance." The only way out of the stifling confines of such earthbound rationalism is a return to the Fathers: "By relying on the patristic doctrine, we can exit the scholastic labyrinth and go out into the open air."⁷

Almost identical sentiments are expressed in the work of Vladimir Lossky, a theologian associated with the neopatristic revival of modern Orthodox theology and conventionally treated as something of an opposite to Bulgakov. For Lossky, it is not transubstantiation but rather the *filioque* that most aptly represents the ills of Western theology with Aquinas, again, its principal proponent. The *filioque* represents an unwarranted rationalization of the mystery of the Trinity, a rationalization that leads inexorably to secularism.⁸ For Lossky, mystery and the experience of deification are the hallmarks of Orthodox theology, whereas Scholasticism has been

fatally flawed in its elevation of reason and consequent loss of any real apophaticism or truly participatory theology. Indeed, he doubts that between the positive rationalizing approach of the West and the negative mystical approach of the East there is really any common ground at all: "The difference between the two conceptions of the Trinity determines, on both sides, the whole character of theological thought. This is so to such an extent that it becomes difficult to apply, without equivocation, the same name of theology to these two different ways of dealing with divine realities."⁹ For Lossky, as for Bulgakov, only a creative return to the Fathers offers a real alternative to the sorry Western saga of decline and fall. This is also the position of Georges Florovsky and John Meyendorff, and has become virtually standard within modern Orthodox theology.

Aquinas features prominently in these juxtapositions of East and West as the foremost exponent and champion of the Scholastic method, a method that is presented in modern Orthodox theology as antithetical to the approach of Gregory Palamas. In practice, Palamas has become for many Orthodox a kind of anti-Thomas or "our answer to Aquinas." This process is certainly to be seen not only as a rejoinder to Jugie but also as a response to the success achieved by the creative retrieval of Thomas led by figures such as Étienne Gilson and Jacques Maritain.

But it has not always been thus. When we turn back to the last years of the Byzantine Empire, we see that the situation is far more complex than such comforting dichotomies would allow. It is difficult not to read these years as one might a Greek tragedy. The recapture of the Queen of Cities in 1261 and diplomatic triumphs such as the Sicilian Vespers were bright spots in an otherwise relentless story of political decline and fall, exacerbated by civil wars and bitter theological disputes. The empire was reduced to client status before the ever-growing might of the Ottomans. It is one of those extraordinary historical conjunctions that 1354—the year of Kydones's translation—was also the date of the Ottoman capture of Gallipoli, which gave the Turks their first permanent foothold in Europe and thereby effectively sealed the fate of the embattled empire.¹⁰ For Christos Yannaras, Kydones's translation was quite as catastrophic in consequence as the loss of Gallipoli. The translation marked the beginning of the extinction of "real Hellenism," the process whereby the living tradition of the Gospel and the Greek Fathers was made subservient to and eventually subsumed by the West. Yannaras notes: "The great historical cycle which started motion in 1354 with Demetrios Kydones as its symbolic marker

seems to be coming to a conclusion in the shape of Greece's consumption by Europe—the final triumph of the pro-unionists.”¹¹

The problem, for Yannaras, is that Scholastic methodology sets a boundary between humanity and God. God becomes an object subjected to the individual intellect and treated as a syllogistically defined entity knowable in his essence. A brief look at questions 2–26 of the *Prima pars* of the *Summa theologiae* will, claims Yannaras, suffice to confirm this impression.¹² In Aquinas, there is no notion of participation. Theology is a rational exercise:

Man in the Western scholastic tradition does not participate personally in the truth of the cosmos. He does not seek to bring out the meaning, the logos of things, the disclosure of the personal activity of God in the cosmos, but seeks with his individualistic intellect to dominate the reality of the physical world. This stance truly forms the foundation of the entire phenomenon of modern technology.¹³

This estimation is broadly Losskian in inspiration and also conforms closely to the grand narrative articulated by Philip Sherrard in his *Greek East and Latin West*.¹⁴

There is much of value in Yannaras's work and more subtlety than such snippets would suggest. His critique of neo-Palamite theology, by which term he encompasses the theology of the whole Russian diaspora, is especially salutary. For Yannaras, neo-Palamite theology has too little purchase in historical reality, whether of the fourteenth or the twentieth century. More worrying for Yannaras is that neo-Palamite theology is “certainly and perhaps exclusively a theology of dialogue,” structured and determined by its relationship with the West. This oppositional mode of theologizing vis-à-vis the West represents an immense danger:

If we continue to theologize dialectically with the West, we shall perhaps come in a short time to represent no more than an interesting, somewhat exotic, aspect of the Western theoretical worldview, or a narrowly confessional doctrine which belongs to the sphere of ‘archaeology of ideas.’ This is, I believe, where the ecumenical dialogue is inevitably leading us; all of us have, I think, personal experience, at conferences and encounters, of the fact that Orthodox views ring out beautifully as poetical notes, deeply moving but completely utopian, having no actual reality within our own Churches today.¹⁵

This is a warning that deserves the most serious attention, particularly in light of the fact that Yannaras recognizes that many of his strictures against the West apply equally to himself and to his homeland.¹⁶ One might perhaps wish that Yannaras had heeded his own precepts more consistently in his work, which remains, it must be said, unduly dialectical and unwontedly oppositional. Yannaras is a brilliant thinker whose penetrating and urgent vision is not best served by the sweeping historical judgments and impossibly simple dichotomies with which he cloaks his grand narrative. He is, for instance, certainly mistaken when it comes to the Byzantine admirers of Thomas. In particular, he assumes that such admirers were completely in thrall to Thomas and quite incapable of critical reception. Moreover, Latin sympathies, for Yannaras, are always and without exception tantamount to unionism. This is, in fact, far from being the case. But rather than belaboring the work of Yannaras still further, let us turn now to some of the key *dramatis personae*, beginning with Demetrios Kydones himself.

In an elaborate *Apology*, written against his many detractors in his own homeland, Kydones recounts the sense of revelation he felt on encountering Thomas for the first time. Like many of his compatriots, Demetrios had not expected much from the Latins. The Latins were generally encountered as merchants and mercenaries, or perhaps as innkeepers. But through his study of Latin and of Thomas in particular, it became apparent to him that the Latins too had people of the highest intellectual caliber. Demetrios was deeply impressed by the sheer discipline and limpidity of Latin theological method, its elegant use of reason and philosophy to articulate the truths revealed in Scripture. What above all seems to have impressed Demetrios was the sheer extent of classical philosophical learning in Thomas and his fellows.¹⁷

In all this, Demetrios is not welcoming an alien culture to which he feels inferior but rather recognizing the fundamental congruity between Romans (Byzantines) and Latins. Fed by the same philosophical springs, and heirs to a common tradition of patristic theology formed by Scripture, both Roman and Latin traditions are deeply united at source. While he acknowledges the estrangement that has built up between these traditions, he understands the divide to be largely a cultural—and especially a linguistic—matter, coupled with a good deal of plain old-fashioned prejudice. He pours scorn on the apparently common assumption of Roman superiority, especially the enduring belief that the world is divided between

Greeks and barbarians, that is, between the Romans and the rest. In this scenario, the Romans are the heirs of Plato and Aristotle, while the Latins barely recognizable as human, fit only for menial activities.¹⁸ Such an attitude has led, inter alia, to a widespread rejection of the testimony of the Fathers of the West and a willingness to accept only that of those who hail from the East. Here he quite explicitly states that this is to make of the geographical distance between East and West a theological divide that is, in essence, non-existent.¹⁹ This absurd conflation of geography and identity represents a manifest betrayal of the truth, truth being neither the property of those of Asia nor of those of Europe.²⁰ Demetrios is certainly aware of a tendency to make the geographical West into a uniform theological category but he resists any such notion with all the forces at his disposal.

Demetrios went on to translate many works of Aquinas, including most of the *Summa theologiae*, in which task he was joined by his brother, Prochoros. Demetrios's translations themselves are done with a good deal of care, most notably in his frequent correction of Thomas's citations of Aristotle against the original Greek.²¹ But in matters theological he finds little, if anything, to critique. Indeed, he came to accept Thomas's teaching on papal primacy and the *filioque*, and was in due course received into communion with the church of the elder Rome. Demetrios's interest in Latin theology was very much bound up with his broader political project of opposing accommodation with the Ottomans and seeking help from the West in order to shore up the embattled empire.²² Demetrios was, of course, largely disappointed in such hopes and had always to contend against the deeply ingrained hostility to the Latins in Byzantium itself. Few were prepared to accept the commonality of Old and New Rome and to heed his plaintive rhetorical question: "What closer allies have the Romans than the Romans?"²³

Demetrios had little sympathy with official Palamite theology. While he wisely kept his own counsel during the key phases of the controversy, the condemnation in 1368 of his brother and fellow-translator of Thomas, Prochoros, prompted him to condemn what he characterized as a verbose and nonsensical revival of polytheism. Prochoros was certainly more theologically astute than his brother, if less gifted in diplomacy. A devout Athonite hieromonk, Prochoros had become the *de facto* leader of the anti-Palamite party on the death of Nikephoros Gregoras in 1360, and assembled a refutation of Palamite theology largely based on Thomas: on

grounds of divine simplicity, the inadmissibility of potentiality in the wholly actual deity, and the impossibility of direct participation in uncreated grace.²⁴ But while Prochoros never felt impelled by his Thomist sympathies to leave the Orthodox Church, he was unwise enough to join the fray only after Palamite theology had been definitively vindicated—not a good tactical move. Demetrios fell into disfavor as a result of his protestations on his brother's behalf—a disfavor his various apologies labored vainly to dispel. Prochoros himself died excommunicated.

But for all his personal trials and tribulations, Demetrios had unleashed something of great power onto the Byzantine world. There were many from across the theological spectrum who found much to admire and emulate in the angelic doctor. Thomas's impact was certainly not to be restricted to anti-Palamite pro-unionists such as Demetrios Kydones.²⁵ In fact, in what follows I shall focus largely on the Palamite and anti-unionist reception of Thomas (not that these two categories always coincide). In other words, I shall be looking at the least obvious areas in which one might expect to find positive estimation of Western theology.

The Palamite party itself betrayed no particular animosity to Western theology per se. Palamas himself was impressed by Augustine, drawing directly on Maximos Planoudes's translation of the *De Trinitate*, and making intriguing use of some Augustinian themes and concepts.²⁶ As heir to a long tradition of Byzantine Scholasticism, he vigorously defended in Aristotelian terms the proper use of reasoned argumentation against the theological agnosticism of Barlaam, even going so far as to defend the Latin use of the syllogism.²⁷ The Emperor John VI Kantakuzene, under whom Palamite theology received canonical status, patronized Demetrios's translation of Thomas and facilitated its wide circulation. He also drew directly on another of Demetrios's translations, the *Refutatio alcorani* of Ricoldo da Monte Croce, for his own anti-Islamic treatises.²⁸ And while Kantakuzene composed a laborious refutation of Prochoros's critique of Palamite theology, he made no criticism of the Scholastic method in general, nor of Thomas in particular, but objected only to the anti-Palamite conclusions reached.²⁹ He even cited Thomas, in Demetrios's translation, with approval, taking the methodological considerations of *Summa contra gentiles* 1.9 as programmatic for his own demolition of Prochoros.³⁰ The sole sure foundation of his refutation was to be Scripture, but with arguments demonstrative and probable drawn from philosophers and holy men to convey the truths revealed in Scripture. Given that

Prochoros's work is solidly based on Thomas (often doing little more than stringing citations together), the use of Thomas to refute Prochoros is not without a certain irony, but it does serve to underline further the willingness of Palamites to embrace much of what they found in Aquinas, especially in terms of methodology.

Neilos Kabasilas, Archbishop of Thessaloniki, is another intriguing example of a Palamite willing to make limited use of Thomas. Neilos had initially welcomed Thomas with unreserved enthusiasm, praising Demetrios's translation and reckoning Thomas an exceptionally valuable teacher. Demetrios himself records that Neilos was at first madly in love with Thomas (μανικὸς ἦν ἐραστής) and with Latin wisdom in general.³¹ But he goes on in his *Apology* to bemoan the fact that Neilos was pressured to go back on his initial stance of unqualified praise under anti-unionist pressure. Nonetheless, even in the treatise on the procession of the Holy Spirit—a piece that attacks Thomas in detailed and vigorous terms—Neilos frequently draws on Thomas's more apophatic declarations in support of his strictures against the untrammelled use of reason in theological discourse.³² By doing so, he is attempting to expose the inherent contradictions in Thomas, contrasting his protestations of the inadequacy of human reason with his evident reliance on reason. Neilos also adopts a Scholastic methodology, including use of the formula of proposition and objection. John Meyendorff observes that Neilos was consciously trying to "overcome the dilemma" between Palamism and Thomism.³³

To nuance the situation further, it is worth noting that in his attacks on the illegitimacy of syllogisms, Neilos depends greatly on similar arguments put forward by Barlaam the Calabrian, the first major enemy of the hesychasts. Here we have an anti-unionist Palamite drawing on Thomas in his critique of Thomas while making use of an anti-Palamite source. This underscores, once again, just how complex the situation really was. There simply are no party lines in the Byzantine reception of Thomas, and certainly no default setting of anti-Scholasticism among either Palamites or anti-unionists.

A similar complexity is evident in the work of Theophanes of Nicaea—a critique of Thomas that nonetheless seems to draw significant inspiration from the angelic doctor. Like Neilos, Theophanes was both a Palamite and an anti-unionist. Ioannis Polemis has made a strong case that Theophanes borrowed some key ideas from Thomas, such as the threefold pattern of divine knowledge and the identity of God's essence and his intellect.

Theophanes organized his refutation around a series of *aporiae* or difficulties requiring solution—a sure sign of his affinities with Scholastic methodology.³⁴

We have another interesting case in point in Nicholas Kabasilas, nephew to Neilos. Nicholas betrays no sense of animosity towards the West and, indeed, is distinctly irenic in his discussions, for example, of divergent Latin liturgical practices. He remained technically a Palamite, but shows no trace of Palamite theology in his writings. Indeed, he composed a treatise explicitly defending the use of reason in theological discourse, a work that has plausible connections with Aquinas and has even been interpreted as anti-Palamite.³⁵ And even the most fervently committed of anti-unionists found it perfectly admissible to make use of Aquinas: witness Joseph Bryennios's and Makarios Makres's adoption of arguments (for example, on the incarnation and consecrated virginity) from the *Summa contra gentiles* in their anti-Islamic works.³⁶

All this does not amount to a wholesale approval of Thomas, still less to a school of "Byzantine Thomism," but it indicates that the supposition of methodological incompatibility between East and West is deeply flawed. The considerable enthusiasm for Aquinas across party lines—Palamite and anti-Palamite, unionist and anti-unionist—shows that the situation is far more subtle and complex than such a supposition would imply. Indeed, I know of only one Byzantine critique of Thomas that asserts methodological incompatibility in wholly unambiguous terms: the refutation of the *Summa contra gentiles* composed by Kallistos Angelikoudes.³⁷ In this bitter and unrelenting polemic, Thomas is characterized as heretical not only in his theological conclusions but also in his very approach to the matter of theology—his use of natural reason and excessive reliance upon Aristotle leading him into the errors of, among others, Arius and Mohammed. For Angelikoudes, human reason has nothing of real value to contribute to theology. Angelikoudes's strategy, if one can call it that, is to pile insult upon insult, calumny upon calumny, with very little clarity of argument or structure. It is not an edifying piece and serves as a painful reminder of the depths of hostility to the Latin world felt in some quarters of Byzantium.

Such instinctive hostility to the Scholastic method is, to repeat, relatively rare on the level of sustained theological discourse. It remained perfectly possible in the Byzantine world to receive Western theology sympathetically without compromising one's Orthodoxy. George (later Patriarch

Gennadios) Scholarios is a particularly intriguing example in this respect.³⁸ Scholarios has the distinction of being both an exceptionally fervent Thomist and the leader of the anti-unionist party the period following the reunion council of Ferrara-Florence (1438–39). Scholarios himself doubted whether Thomas had any more devoted disciple than him: “I do not think that any one of his followers has honored Thomas Aquinas more than I; nor does anyone who becomes his follower need any other muse.”³⁹ He regarded his master as quite simply “the most excellent expositor and interpreter of Christian theology,” valuing especially his impeccable grasp of philosophy (especially of Aristotle) and his foundation in the universal patristic tradition. As was the case with Demetrios Kydones, Scholarios was not welcoming a foreign import but recognizing essentially “one of us”—albeit in unfamiliar Latin garb.

Scholarios was certainly no uncritical reader of Thomas. He was quite prepared to disagree with him on any matter on which he departed from the teachings of the Orthodox Church. But he was ready to take on board new doctrines to which the Orthodox Church had no definite objection, for example the doctrine of transubstantiation. He was also prepared to adopt Scholastic positions not embraced by Thomas: for instance, the notion of the immaculate conception as developed by Duns Scotus.

The fact that Thomas was plain wrong on a number of counts—the *filioque*, the papal claims, the essence-energies distinction—in no way detracted, for Scholarios, from his overall value. As Gennadios famously laments: “If only, most excellent Thomas, you had not been born in the West! Then you would not have been obliged to justify the errors of that Church concerning, for instance, the procession of the Spirit and the distinction between the divine essence and operation. Then you would have been as infallible in theological matters as you are in this treatise on ethics.”⁴⁰ Thomas ought, in short, to have been born a Byzantine.⁴¹ In a similar vein, Gennadios observes: “This Thomas, although he was Latin by race and faith, and so differs from us in those things in which the Roman Church has in recent times innovated, is, in other respects, wise and profitable for those who read him.”⁴² In this passage, he is defending himself against the ever-deadly charge of Latin-mindedness, but at the same time refuting any notion of fundamental opposition between East and West. The deviations of the Church of Rome are unfortunate aberrations that must not be allowed to obscure the essential congruity of East and West.

Turning now towards a summary conclusion, I would emphasize that positive reception of Thomas often revolves around his methodology and anti-Islamic potential. Acceptance of particular conclusions, especially on contentious theological issues, is less prevalent. Similarly, we must not neglect the substantial anti-Latin prejudice in Byzantine society at large that made sympathy for Western theology always a risky pursuit. But the examples I have given, albeit necessarily by way of an *Überblick*, show that the supposition of a methodological gap between Scholasticism and Orthodoxy simply does not hold. There was no default setting of antipathy to Thomas among either Palamites or anti-unionists. Aquinas found admirers among unionists and anti-unionists, Palamites and anti-Palamites alike.

The Byzantines who welcomed Thomas did so in a critical fashion. They were quite capable of a sophisticated mode of reception that did not necessarily lead to any form of doctrinal compromise. They also welcomed him not as an alien import from a superior culture but as one of their own, as an exceptionally able exponent of traditional Christian Aristotelianism rooted in Scripture and in the Fathers. It is by no means far-fetched to see in this reception the recognition of the common tradition of Greek East and Latin West, a Christian universalism that was certainly disintegrating but was by no means dead in the water even in the fourteenth century.

Modern theologians, Orthodox and Catholic alike, have tended to take this disintegration of Christian universalism as a given, reading back into the last years of Byzantium a theological gulf that is simply not in evidence at the time. The Byzantine reception of Thomas must prompt us to seriously reconsider the whole issue of theological incompatibility between East and West.

Georges Florovsky may be of some use here. Florovsky was distinctly and deeply allergic to Scholasticism when it came to what he saw as its wholly baneful influence on Russian theology: This is the *leitmotif* of his masterwork *Ways of Russian Theology*. In this respect, he conforms exactly to the supposition of eternal opposition I have discussed. But Florovsky was also able to see potential in "high Scholasticism" for a revival of Orthodox theology as part of what he called a "new creative act."⁴³ He took Lossky to task for his exaggerated and un-nuanced depiction of Thomas, observing that he "probably exaggerates the tension between East and West even in the patristic tradition."⁴⁴ But Lossky, too, could be remarkably positive when dealing with Western theology in its own terms, away from the question of its influence on the Christian East. He pays warm

tribute to Étienne Gilson's "existentialist" retrieval of the "authentic Thomism of St. Thomas and his immediate predecessors," and sought in his own thesis to discern a continuing apophaticism in the medieval West in the shape of Meister Eckhart.⁴⁵ Such sentiments in Florovsky and Lossky are no more than hints, but they do serve as a cheering indicator of the potential for an Orthodox reappropriation of Thomas.

If we are indeed to move beyond the dialectical theologizing that has characterized Orthodox theology in the twentieth century, then the Byzantine reception of Aquinas may serve as a useful starting-point. The reception history I have outlined offers a paradigm for the recovery of the capacity for critical but sympathetic reception of Western sources within the context of a Christian universalism. It means, in short, regaining the ability to recognize orthodoxy in unfamiliar garb and eschewing any hermetic and reactive form of self-definition. Eastern Orthodoxy is of little value so long as it remains merely Eastern. If Orthodoxy is to have any real purchase in the twenty-first century it is going to have to be both oriental and occidental. Light from the East indeed, but also light from the West.⁴⁶